



Schiller and Company, or How Habermas Incites Us to Play

Citation

Sommer, Dorris. 2009. Schiller and company, or how Habermas incites us to play. *New Literary History* 40(1): 85-103.

Published Version

doi:10.1353/nlh.0.0069

Permanent link

<http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:HUL.InstRepos:5125276>

Terms of Use

This article was downloaded from Harvard University's DASH repository, and is made available under the terms and conditions applicable to Open Access Policy Articles, as set forth at <http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:HUL.InstRepos:dash.current.terms-of-use#OAP>

Share Your Story

The Harvard community has made this article openly available.
Please share how this access benefits you. [Submit a story](#).

[Accessibility](#)

Doris Sommer

Schiller and Company, or

How Habermas Incites Us to Play

Friedrich Schiller's *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man* (1794) is worth re-reading today from the troubled fronts of politics and pedagogy.¹ While our government claims to defend democracy by waging war abroad and creating immigration crises at home, we might remember Schiller's concern about the French Revolution running headstrong behind reason into "barbarism" as it toppled one state in its enthusiasm for another. Specters of that abstract and unfeeling reason are also driving our public schools toward quantitative measurement of student achievement and the self-destructive elimination of arts and interpretation. Public education, so earnestly bent on practical results that it squeezes out room and resources for play and the arts in order to add another math class or a prep session, hopes to raise scores on standardized tests. Ironically for educators and tragically for children, the sacrifice of play and arts on an altar of correctness has actually kept the scores down, because the tests measure more than data retrieval; they also gauge the students' freer critical faculty, which depends on the exercise of imagination that Schiller called play. Schools are failing our children, in part at least, through indifference or excessive caution about creativity.

Surely the connection between the eroded room for political debate and a play starved education is worth worrying about again, if worry leads to ways beyond the crisis. Too often academic essays that offer analysis and critique stop short of speculating about remedies, as if intellectual work were constrained from exploring what Schiller called imaginative “appearances.” But essays that remain risk-averse miss the potential of the genre to “assay” or to try out ideas. I confess to a preference for risk and invite you to consider joining Schiller and company as advocates for an aesthetic education that promotes making art, not only appreciating it, by developing an innate drive to play, the *Spieltrieb* that Schiller identified and named as man’s faculty for turning conflict into beautiful works of art. By re-reading Schiller and mentioning the reformist educators who directly or indirectly follow him, I hope to offer a few unanticipated connections that may have some scholarly interest, but my purpose is to prime our urgent conversations today with his enduring, almost eerily contemporary, invitation to loosen up and to play.

LET’S LOOSEN UP

Our humanity depends on it, he was sure, because playfulness for Schiller is no frivolous pastime. Play is the instinct for freedom and for art, the drive that can harmonize man’s two other mutually murderous instincts, transforming the conflict between Passion and Reason into aesthetic

| pleasure. Man is mortal flesh, driven by the material instinct which enslaves him to nature through the passions and holds him back in a savage state. He is also a timeless spirit that obeys the instinct of reason which organizes the world into abstract pitiless principles that can reduce human life to barbarity [Letter xx]. Seriousness may address what is useful or moral, but only play engages the disinterested intensity that opens paths toward freedom [Letter xv]. Other philosophers who looked on as France convulsed in revolutionary spasms turned anxiously to political events where they assumed the “great destiny of man is to be played out” [Letter ii]; and they considered competing designs of the state in order to determine which was most useful for constructing and preserving civilization. But Schiller mistrusted the cold scrutiny and bracketed the big political questions. He went to the heart of the matter, and identified the crisis as an abandonment of the imaginative arts and therefore of freedom;

| Utility is the great idol of the time, to which all powers do homage and all subjects are subservient. In this great balance of utility, the spiritual service of art has no weight, and, deprived of all encouragement; it vanishes from the noisy Vanity Fair of our time. The very spirit of philosophical inquiry itself robs the imagination of one promise after another, and the

frontiers of art are narrowed, in proportion as the limits of science are enlarged. [Letter ii]

Schiller anticipates objections to his defense of the freedom achieved through play and the arts as a value that trumps even political rationality. Perhaps the young reader to whom he addresses these letters would prefer “a loftier theme than that of art,” which probably seemed “unseasonable in desperate times” [Letter ii]. Yet the preference is quite practical, Schiller explains, because play can lead the way to liberty while political philosophy keeps missing its target. Creative arts exercise the free play of imagination as they produce new forms, objects, and arrangements. Making something new, something for which there is no prior concept, is the liberating activity that rises above man’s dual nature. Only this playfulness can win some distance from the conflicting drives of sensuousness and reason to locate the freedom that art thrives on. True artists don’t deny or avoid conflict; they struggle with it, energized by contending forces to produce beautiful new works that bear a mark of the freedom that enabled innovation. And that mark, made visible or audible to the public through a work of art, multiplies the experience of freedom into a shared or common sense on which to ground enlightened politics. By contrast, impulsive and deductive political philosophy is a top-down affair that was leading France to forfeit freedom. Inspired by an abstract ideal, philosophy failed to take into account the

complexity of human nature: mere reason underestimated the real dangers of resistance and reprisal.

This is why Hannah Arendt rejected idealist upheavals, from the French Revolution to the Bolshevik Revolution it stirred up a century later. She much preferred the liberal and pragmatic American style of revolutionary independence that followed gradually from freely entered personal contracts and added up to a free state.² Were Arendt writing today however, rather than in 1962, she might conclude that by now liberal economics has outlived its revolutionary promise to level hierarchies and reward individual effort. Mature economies flourish on the social and political asymmetries that liberalism leaves in its wake, both domestically and internationally, while developing states struggle to emulate powerful counterparts in order to enter into economic accords, even when the political costs are high.³ If liberal answers to the demand for political freedom now fail to show the way, and idealist approaches were misguided from the start, what route remains? Schiller would not have been stumped by the question, even if he had hoped to follow the liberal course and found it clogged, because the alternative he articulated to primarily political paths has real staying power.

Beauty is the only sure, if indirect, conduit to freedom. Schiller insisted that “this matter of art is less foreign to the needs than to the tastes

of our age; nay, that, to arrive at a solution even in the political the road of aesthetics must be pursued, because it is through beauty that we arrive at freedom” [Letter ii]. Almost anyone at the time of the French Revolution could see that those who pursue short-cuts to liberty as an abstract and reasonable principle, indifferent to human passions and material needs, do violence to the very people they would set free. An aesthetic education that includes both making and appreciating art is Schiller’s remedy for revolution, because art exercises our human faculties in ways that embrace antagonism and contain it. To be moved by an aesthetically pleasing effect is to acknowledge for a moment, or for as long as the experience of beauty lasts, a success in wrestling material into new forms, repairing the damage that flesh and spirit do to one another. At precarious peace in the world, an artist or an admirer -- both count as active citizens for Schiller, though real fans are artists in training -- achieves freedom and invites others to share and to cultivate the experience. And, since wrestling with matter and circumstance takes discipline and training, Schiller offers his series of letters as encouragement and advice.

FACE TO FACE

Strategically, Schiller addresses himself to one reader. A first recommendation follows implicitly from this strategy: to focus on reforming one individual at a time, not on creating a collective or a state. He performs

the intimacy of one-on-one instruction through personal letters to a single young citizen, rather than addressing a general treatise to an entire hypostasized republic of readers. Even though Schiller concedes that “the establishment and structure of true political freedom” is the most perfect work of art [Letter ii], to perfect that work meant first to prepare appropriate workers, in the shape of sturdy and judicious citizens. Unlike other arts that can transform raw material beyond recognition into new objects, politics demands a gentler touch; it depends on human beings as both the raw material and the ultimate users of the product: “The political and educating artist has to treat his material man with a very different kind of respect from that shown by the artist of fine art to his work. He must spare man's peculiarity and personality, not to produce a deceptive effect on the senses, but objectively and out of consideration for his inner being” [Letter iv]. The step-by-step aesthetic education offers a “subjective” transformation of each person’s private war between conflicting drives into a knack for making public peace offerings. There is really no alternative because, unredeemed by art, man stays torn or he just stays stuck, mired on one side in material appetites and arrested on the other by strictures of morality and law.

The pedagogical process takes time, Schiller admits, so we had better be prepared to spend it. There is no quick fix, since rushing ahead of our “subjective” time-bound bodies to design an “objective” state derived from

timeless ideals is sure to suppress a good part of our humanity [Letter iv].⁴

“To deny the importance of subjectivity in the process of transforming the world and history is naïve and simplistic,” Paolo Freire would repeat in our time, through the updated manual for educators he composed in response to scientific Marxists; “It is to admit the impossible: a world without men.”⁵

And today Jacques Rancière defends the one-on-one approach in, for example, his comments on a “one-seater” contemplative theater project that earned the scorn of critics who imagine that political art needs to address particular issues: “It is political by virtue of the very distance that it takes with respect to [social structure, conflict, identities] . . . It is political as its own practices shape forms of visibility that reframe the way in which practices, manners of being and modes of feeling and saying are interwoven in a commonsense, which means a ‘sense of the common.’”⁶ No enlightened masterpiece of legislation can move people to identify with the state, unless people are already educated in the spirit of freedom that the state presumably represents. “Perhaps there is a vicious circle in our previous reasoning,” Schiller teases [Letter ix]. Freire will point to the same dizzying and discouraging circle when he asks, “if the implementation of a liberating education requires political power and the oppressed have none, how then is it possible to carry out the pedagogy of the oppressed prior to the revolution?”⁷ The way out and forward, Schiller says, is to take a step

backwards, away from both of the conflicting drives that pull man in opposite and deadly directions. The opening activity or “instrument” that affords some distance for contemplation, away from the contention of corporeal neediness and disembodied knowledge “is the art of the beautiful” [Letter ix].

for this newly necessary faculty is found in the judgment of beauty, because appreciation for beauty does not depend either on the a priori principles of nature or on pre-existing personal needs or desires. The pleasure produced by beauty can therefore be disinterested. Subjects can determine whether a particular object or event is in fact beautiful, or merely pleasing, by disengaging from the stimulus long enough to examine their ulterior motives for feeling pleasure. If there are none, if the pleasure has owed no debt to need or want or anticipation, then the pleasure is judged to be aesthetic.

This unpredictable, disarmingly new quality of beauty remains the signpost for Schiller’s aesthetic education. His first letter announces that the series will “rest chiefly upon Kantian principles” and apologizes in advance for any deviation as due to the writer’s own incapacity. In fact, except for one dramatic difference – a focus on making rather than judging -- Schiller does stay quite close to Kant, even while he takes smaller liberties too by coining neologisms to replace the master’s terms and by disconnecting

morality from desire. For example, where Kant had counterpoised pure reason (the faculty of knowledge and understanding through universal a priori principles in nature) to practical reason (the faculty of desire and subjectivity in moral reasoning grounded in freedom), Schiller keeps the distinction but drives it to more evident conflict by renaming the faculties as instincts. The *Formtrieb* [formal drive] lines up with reason and abstract principles to wrest order from multifarious nature; and the *Sinnestrieb* [sensual drive] names lawless sensual desire still enslaved by nature. Competing against each other, they would tear tormented man into lifeless pieces.

Kant offered his *Third Critique* on aesthetic judgment as a bridge between pure and practical reason because “there is a great gulf fixed” between the realm of the supersensible and that of sensible nature.⁸ He managed to connect the two thanks to the faculty of judgment which works in both registers of reason to keep them in check: “A critique of pure reason, i.e., of our faculty of judging on a priori principles, would be incomplete if the critical examination of judgment, which is a faculty of knowledge, and as such lays claim to independent principles, were not dealt with separately.”⁹ Not that judgment can be separated from reason, to which it is annexed in the process of reasoning, but that it needs to be considered separately as a rather strange moment for philosophy, a kind of pause in

order to test the direction of understanding or of subjective interest in the form of desire or morality. Judgment can do its work of stimulating reflective checks on reason because judgment has no a priori principles. It responds impartially to stimuli, without measuring the response against pre-existing models or concepts.

Literally critical to the faculty of reason, disinterested judgment is hard to locate either in the aprioristic workings of pure reason or in the desire and morality within practical reason, where embodied needs and obligations similarly depend on a priori principles. Where, then, is independent judgment to be found and cultivated? Kant's answer famously lay in aesthetics. Without frequent exercise in deciding whether our enjoyment of beauty is free of appetite and expectation, the faculty of judgment remains contaminated by the very drives it should hold in check. Schiller would take this philosophical observation to its pedagogical consequence rather than just assume, as Kant did, that people naturally develop an aesthetic sense of life.

Kant's judgment of disinterested pleasure produces yet another innovation in philosophy, on Arendt's reading: It links one subjectivity to others. "Critical thinking is possible only where the standpoints of all others are open to inspection. Hence, critical thinking, while still a solitary business, does not cut itself off from 'all others.' To be sure, it still goes on

in isolation, but by the force of imagination it makes the others present and thus moves in a space that is potentially public, open to all sides.”¹⁰ And since one imagines others moved by the same disinterested pleasure, an inter-subjective delight can become the “common sense” of beauty. Kant found it remarkable “how little difference there is between the learned and the ignorant in judging, while there is the greatest difference in making.”¹¹ Though Schiller would rejoin that “making” is as general an activity as judging, Arendt celebrates Kant’s already significant stretch of philosophy, from one subject’s isolated relationship to truth or morality toward imagining another subject’s response to beauty. Here for the first time, she says, philosophy makes a lateral move from one subject to another, unlike standard vertical steps between a subject and the True or the Good. She identifies this common sense of beauty as the foundation for other interpersonal interchanges grounded in disinterested freedom. The freely intuited inter-subjectivity of aesthetic judgment builds a two-lane bridge: It harmonizes our otherwise disjointed faculties of cognition and desire; and it links one subject to others.

Even before Schiller recoiled at the relentless *Formtrieb* that drove the French Revolution to barbaric excess, Kant had worried about the arrogance of pure reason, “the officious pretensions of understanding.”¹² In response, he demonstrated not only that understanding is restrained by ideas that have

no a priori grounding in nature, but also that, in order to complete its own task of cognition, understanding needs to exercise judgment,¹³ a faculty that depends on free and disinterested contemplation. Kant followed the consequences of disinterested pleasure with quiet dignity to ground a peaceful coexistence between knowing and feeling in the dependence of each on the judgment that we hone through aesthetic appreciation. Arendt adds – with an innocent mischief that Schiller would have recognized as play -- that Kant never really wrote a political philosophy: the title of her *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy* is a joke, both because he was too cautious to risk political attention and because a politics would have been redundant after his aesthetics.¹⁴ The judgment of beauty that locates a commonality in freedom has done the work already. I suspect that Arendt also had Schiller's bold manifesto in mind, and that his strong case for saving reason through feelings made the master's mildness vibrate for her with political purpose.¹⁵ Here is Schiller:

Reason has done all that she could in finding the law and promulgating it; it is for the energy of the will and the ardour of feeling to carry it out. To issue victoriously from her contest with force, truth herself must first become a force, and turn one of the instincts of man into her champion in the empire of phaenomena. For instincts are the only motive forces in the

material world. If hitherto truth has so little manifested her victorious power, this has not depended on the understanding, which could not have unveiled it, but on the heart which remained closed to it, and on instinct which did not act with it.

[Letter viii]

Schiller's daring and energy raise the din of the dueling drives to a pitch that demands more active intervention than a contemplative pause will allow. Kant had favored spectatorship over action, impartiality over taking part in history. "The importance of the occurrence is for him exclusively in the eye of the beholder," Arendt stresses, "in the opinion of the onlookers who proclaim their attitude in public. . . . The spectator is impartial by definition – no part is assigned him. Hence, withdrawal from direct involvement to a standpoint outside the game is a condition *sine qua non* of all judgment."¹⁶ But Schiller looked on as history swept practically everyone into action. Not to pursue freedom actively through art would be complicity with disaster. "Now man can be opposed to himself in a twofold manner: either as a savage, when his feelings rule over his principles; or as a barbarian, when his principles destroy his feelings. The savage despises art, and acknowledges nature as his despotic ruler; the barbarian laughs at nature, and dishonors it, but he often proceeds in a more contemptible way than the savage, to be the slave of his senses" [Letter iv]. When Walter

Benjamin remarked that the history of civilization was also the history of barbarism he was evidently glossing Schiller's condemnation of reason run wild.¹⁷ Compared to Kant's warning against the self-defeating "officious pretensions" of understanding, Schiller's objection sounds almost shrill:

Have I gone too far in this portraiture of our times? I do not anticipate this stricture, but rather another - that I have proved too much by it. You will tell me that the picture I have presented resembles the humanity of our day, but it also bodies forth all nations engaged in the same degree of culture, because all, without exception, have fallen off from nature by the *abuse of reason*, before they can return to it through reason" [Letter vi, my emphasis]."

The return depends on working with passion. Starting in step with Kant, Schiller shows the short circuit of a single-minded drive. But instead of checking reason with disinterested judgment, Schiller dispatches a Reason worthy of its name on a self-correcting detour *through* the passions. "Reason is obliged to make this demand, because her nature impels her to completeness and to the removal of all bounds; while every exclusive activity of one or the other impulse leaves human nature incomplete and places a limit in it" [Letter xv].

Schiller's point of departure from Kant comes after the step they both take backward to disengage from contending instincts. Where Kant had stopped at the hiatus for disinterested reflection, Schiller gets a fresh start towards producing new forms. Schiller wonders how reliable judgment *per se* can be when passions run high and inflame whole populations or else singe them into passivity with the dread of smoldering ruins. Difficult times need outlets for the energy that would otherwise fight or fester; they need ever new interventions to wrest pleasing forms out of decaying matter. Schiller, the artist and maker of new things, girds for action to quell the raging drives of the *Formtrieb* against the *Sinnestrieb*. Where the master had left the judgment of beauty as the last word, the disciple smuggles into his missive the act of making art.

PLAY'S THE THING

Some act of disruption was called for to break the vicious circle of demands and disasters. The circle locked out freedom from a state that depends on its citizens to exercise freedom, but that citizens in turn depend on to structure the exercise by means of education. Kant simply syncopated the rhythm of history with halts for judgment of the world as it is, counting on an innate faculty even while he admitted it needs training; but Schiller's bold intervention was to offer that training, educate citizens as active artists who imagine not only what is, but what could be. His step back from the

conflicting drives activates a motor for making art: a third humanizing instinct, the *Spieltrieb* or “Playdrive.” Play builds a dynamic bridge called art in order to brace the conflict between flesh and spirit. As a remedy for reason’s abuses of nature and for nature’s indifference toward reason, the Playdrive takes a risk on the uncharted practice of creative art. The postulation of this third drive is Schiller’s most original departure from Kant: the freedom that beauty makes available at the moment of judgment discloses a new horizon stimulating the observer to make more art and thereby to expand the experience of freedom. “Soon it will not be sufficient for things to please him; he will wish to please” [Letter xxvii]. Creative play links individuals with the collective by leaving traces of particularity in the artwork, while the work also accesses a general freedom to produce responses, variations, new experiments. “Independently of the use to which it is destined, the object ought also to reflect the enlightened intelligence which imagines it, the hand which shaped it with affection, the mind free and serene which chose it and exposed it to view” [Letter xxvii]. When an artistic experiment succeeds, it invites or distracts even an unenlightened public to recognize the man-made miracle of timeless form in material incarnation.

For Schiller, the tortuous process of making art dissolves the contradiction between time and timelessness, even for skeptics who can be

moved by beauty when they would not be budged by argument. The promise of reconciliation through irresistible pleasure inspires this unabashed sermon:

Direct the world on which you act towards that which is good, and the measured and peaceful course of time will bring about the results. You have given it this direction if by your teaching you raise its thoughts towards the necessary and the eternal; . . Cherish triumphant truth in the modest sanctuary of your heart; give it an incarnate form through beauty, that it may not only be the understanding that does homage to it, but that feeling may lovingly grasp its appearance . . . Live with your age, but be not its creation; labour for your contemporaries, but do for them what they need, and not what they praise. Without having shared their faults, share their punishment with a noble resignation, and bend under the yoke which they find is as painful to dispense with as to bear. . . The gravity of your principles will keep them off from you, but in play they will still endure them. Their taste is purer than their heart, and it is by their taste you must lay hold of this suspicious fugitive. In vain will you combat their maxims, in vain will you condemn their actions; but you can try your moulding hand on their

leisure. Drive away caprice, frivolity, and coarseness, from their pleasures, and you will banish them imperceptibly from their acts, and length from their feelings. Everywhere that you meet them, surround them with great, noble, and ingenious forms; multiply around them the symbols of perfection, till appearance triumphs over reality, and art over nature. [end of Letter ix]

This is no romantic brief promoting feeling over reason, no advice to aim for the heart instead of the head in order to win people to the truth. Instead Schiller holds out for enlightened dispassionate taste as a common sense of value. “Their taste is purer than their heart.” Cultivate that taste with real beauty, he adds in a Kantian spirit, and common sense will overtake pettiness. But cultivation cannot prosper under the weight of Kant’s grave and off-putting principles. So Schiller incites us to play and to enchant even unwilling subjects with more art than they can resist; that way reluctant spirits can find freedom and not block the way with their inertia. Reason is quite helpless here, since arguments excite counter-arguments but not the will to change. It was just this tendency, where counter-arguments set off a spiral of reason and resistance, that led Foucault, among others, to become skeptical about the possibility of real change, as if reason were the only faculty that mattered.

Schiller did not despair. Nor would John Dewey, Herbert Marcuse,¹⁸ Paolo Freire, Antonio Gramsci,¹⁹ Augusto Boal,²⁰ Antanas Mockus, Jacques Rancière. These and other exemplary agents of change investigate the spirals of power and passion to locate notches or weak points that may admit interference. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1968), Freire called these points “limit situations” that can provoke innovative limit actions, interventions that go beyond currently legitimate procedure.²¹ Mockus, the former mayor of Bogotá, Colombia, would call the openings ambiguous or unfinished moments of a narrative.²² By a deceptively simple replacement of the preposition *for*, Freire short-circuited the closed system of inversions that follows from Hegel’s dialectic between masters, who become dependent on their slaves, and slaves, who master productive processes. The circle opens by interrupting the top-down and bottom-up dynamic with two-way dialogue. Rather than work *for* the oppressed, in the vanguard manner of Lukacs and other Marxists who take the lead and thereby recreate the asymmetries they had rejected as bourgeois, Freire exhorts us to work shoulder to shoulder *with* the oppressed on creative projects that interrupt systematic unfairness.²³ The problem has been, he says, that when the oppressed get some power, they tend to become oppressors instead of building solidarity. Freire’s solution is to play new games. Instead of vertical follow-the-leader, he invites us to play team sports that respect the

initiative of each player in horizontal relationships that can add up to democracy. Liberty lives in the form of these lateral labor relations for Freire. Curiously, the shape of this Marxist reformer's improved society looks a lot like liberal inter-subjectivity among equals.

Freire's appreciation for ingenuity in everyone doesn't exactly depend on art, if you take his word for it. But his instructions for upsetting an oppressive status quo by way of cultural interventions bring him into an inevitable conversation with artists and indirectly with Schiller, because successful interventions must be artful.²⁴ For Freire a systemic view of education would be paralyzing, since change would seem impossible without the kind of liberating education that existing systems inhibit. The only effective approach to change is to create projects that force wedges of alternative education into systemic stratification and thereby disrupt oppressive stasis with dynamic models of equality. Freire may not call the disruptive innovations art, but the risk-taking collaborative experiments he advocated probably merit the name, even if they are not "purposeless" in the disinterested way that identifies art for Kant and his disciples.²⁵ Schiller might have hesitated to confer the honorific title of artist on Freire, because didactic content-driven art was a contradiction in terms. Art doesn't preach; it demands freedom of the maker and delivers it to the public. [Letter xxii]

But Freire is too powerful a partisan of educational reform for us to yield him up to a purist objection without lodging a counter-argument on his behalf. The instance of Schiller lets us see that Freire's pedagogy of the oppressed is a notably formal novelty, practically indifferent to the substance of lessons but alive to their relational grammar. Freire plays with conventional hierarchies of teacher and student, leader and follower, to scramble the order and level the players into risky horizontal relationships where a teacher's expertise can be humbled by a student's experience. I recognize the points of contact between this pedagogy and Schiller's aesthetic education, in order to underline their common grounding in dynamic exchanges between ideas and material reality. Like Schiller's own *Letters*, Freire's book is a purposeful intervention that exhorts us to be creative, though Schiller would keep our creations free of immediate purpose so that works of art may train the soul toward freedom.

Freire may be drawing from Schiller's legacy only indirectly. But an earlier twentieth-century educational reformer enlisted Schiller explicitly in a provocative defense of the artist in everyman as the cornerstone of democracy. I mean the philosopher John Dewey. His encomium to art as a fundamental human experience sounds practically paraphrased from the *Aesthetic Education*: "The existence of art is the concrete proof . . . that man uses the materials and energies of nature with intent to expand his own life,

and that he does so in accord with the structure of his organism – brain, sense-organs, and muscular system. Art is the living and concrete proof that man is capable of restoring consciously, and thus on the plane of meaning, the union of sense, need, impulse and action characteristic of the live creature.”²⁶ A fan of Schiller, who thought about art “independently of the use to which it is destined [Letter xxvii],” and a rather harsh critic of Kant’s exemption of beauty from any practical purpose, Dewey considered art to be anything done with care, intensity, and satisfaction:²⁷ “the tense grace of the ball-player infects the onlooking crowd . . . the delight of the housewife in tending her plants. . . What Coleridge said of the reader of poetry is true in its way of all who are happily absorbed in their activities of mind and body.”²⁸ This democratizing adjustment of registers specifically rejects specious distinctions between intellectuals and artists, bringing philosopher Dewey even closer to artist Schiller:

The difference between the esthetic and the intellectual is thus one of the places where emphasis falls in the constant rhythm that marks the interactions of the live creature with his surroundings. The ultimate matter of both emphases in experience is the same, as is also their general form. The odd notion that an artist does not think and a scientific inquirer does

nothing else is the result of converting a difference of tempo
and emphasis into a difference in kind.²⁹

Dewey didn't privilege one form over another. Instead he stayed close to Schiller by celebrating the intensity of serious play that took many and new forms.

"Form is experienced for itself" is Jacques Rancière's short-hand for Schiller's founding and "unsurpassable" manifesto for the "aesthetic regime" of art. Rancière defines this regime in contrast both to the "ethical regime of images," which cares more about content than about form, and to the "poetic or representative regime of arts," which privileges particular rules of genre and ways of making. For Rancière as for Schiller, art sets itself free in instances of pure suspension that are nevertheless indistinguishable from moments of daily life. "The aesthetic regime asserts the absolute singularity of art and, at the same time, destroys any pragmatic criterion for isolating this singularity. It simultaneously establishes the autonomy of art and the identity of its forms with the forms that life uses to shape itself."³⁰ Remarkably aligned with Dewey's appreciation for Schiller's everyman artist, Rancière never mentions the American philosopher, and he holds back from openly advocating the approach that looked so liberating before World War II in Dewey's 1932 essays. [Rancière doesn't mention Freire either, even though his *Ignorant Schoolmaster* (1987) would have

found good company in the widely circulated *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.] Though Schiller's aesthetic revolution "produced a new idea of political revolution" as the realization of a common and creative humanity, and though this became the core of German Romanticism "summarized in the rough draft of a program written together by Hegel, Hölderlin, and Schelling," the political movement failed and tainted the aesthetic model with failure too: "Modernity thus became something like a fatal destiny based on a fundamental forgetting."³¹ Rancière doesn't simply decry the loss; he also jogs our cultural memory to rediscover Schiller and company. It is too soon to declare defeat, he chides his relatively privileged colleagues, for an aesthetic regime that can still multiply and redistribute instances of art in egalitarian relation to life. It is also irresponsibly convenient, Rancière adds, for intellectuals to complain about collective losses while they while they do little to recover resources and instead live comfortably above the rubble.

The accusation of bad faith among our critics recalls Schiller's objection to the willful and humorless dismissal of play. Playfulness would interrupt the complacency of despair that remains stuck in unhappy history. Because play short-circuits the spiraling antagonism between flesh and spirit, and side-steps existing arrangements in the name of imagination and freedom, it is the surest way to achieve lasting social progress, Schiller

affirms in one letter after another. In any case, practically all other approaches to change build in their own self-defeating dynamic of resistance and rejection. Without pleasure there is no enduring progress, I am learning, because imposed change generates resentment and rebellion. Schiller underscored this lesson for me when I re-read his *Letters*, especially the homily quoted above that urges us to charm the enemy when we cannot convince him. But the message came to me first from a contemporary master of play, Antanas Mockus, philosopher and former mayor of Bogotá.

ICE BREAKERS

First elected in 1995, Mockus took office when the city seemed beyond help. For more than a decade, general chaos had kept the capital off limits for tourists and had tormented residents. Given a level of corruption that turned investment against itself, the situation appeared hopeless. More money for economic recovery would deepen the pockets of drug dealers, and more armed police would escalate the number of guns and therefore the level of violence. What intervention could possibly make sense in this festering and volatile situation? When I ask this question of economists and political scientists, they think hard but then admit they are stumped. When I ask it of artists, they usually stall for more time, awaiting an inspiration from somewhere outside the box of familiar tools. As for Mockus,

intellectually he understood his administration in social-scientific, rational, procedural terms designed to generate shared norms and to build consensus, along lines so centrally derived from Jürgen Habermas that some students affectionately called the mayor Professor Habermockus. But in practice, Mockus achieved consensus and civility by spiking communicative action with the kind of unconventional creativity we call play or art.

To revive a democratizing desire for civility, Mayor Mockus combined art and antics with accountability. As if Schiller were coaching him, the mayor turned to play in his efforts to reunite the body and soul of the city.³² He broke the ice by replacing the corrupt traffic police with pantomime artists who multiplied their numbers by training new recruits from among the artists on the street. The unavoidable spectacle created a public of participant pedestrians and drivers who began to enjoy communication with strangers for the first time in over a decade and to revive a common sense of citizenship that dared to overcome fear and isolation. Pragmatism depends on a measure of hedonism, as well as on tough law enforcement and fiscal transparency: in philosophical summary, that combination was the general program this visionary mayor called “civic culture.” The city that plays together stays alive to civic rights and obligations. In a recent interview, Mockus commented on several Latin American mayors who were eager to learn from his experience.³³ The mayor

of Asunción, Paraguay was searching for new leads after thorough statistical analyses of the city's problems had failed to spark projects for amelioration, while the mayors of Mexico City and Belo Horizonte were willing to try playful interventions. Buenos Aires being risk-averse under its current mayor, Mockus concluded there was hardly anything creative to be done there.

Play assumes risks through uncharted moves that depend on freedom and therefore demand it, moves that anticipate failures as cues for abandoning some experiments and constructing new ones. Play also admits to living in the shadow-life of mere appearances, to being blatantly counterfactual. When critics accuse Mockus of thinking counterfactually, he agrees with them, but adds with almost impish self-evidence that it is impossible to think of change without appealing to counterfactual flights of imagination. The equivalent term in Schiller for counterfactual thinking is “appearance” [*Schein*], and he defends it at length against both “extreme stupidity and extreme intelligence.” The one has no imagination, and the other refuses anything but ideal truth. They cannot or will not think outside the box of reality and consequently forfeit the freedom that appearance can exercise.

DELIBERATIVE DIFFERENCES.

Under-determined and available for imaginative explorations, appearance is precisely the feature that draws Habermas to Schiller's *Letters* as an antidote to both the willfully naïve tendentiousness of Surrealism and the withering intelligence of Deconstruction. In the 1920s and 30s, Surrealism had imagined that art worthy of its unconventional nature could dissolve the tensions built into modern life by plumbing a deep and irrational level of consciousness that dreamt away the distance between art and life.³⁴ By the 1970s, Deconstruction revived this oneiric campaign against reasonable distinctions in a more philosophical register: If meaning is constructed from words and words are artificial abstractions that over-shoot or under-estimate the things or actions they signify, then words betray us; they mislead intentions and undermine communication.³⁵ Presumptively real information unravels under this rigorous scrutiny and leads practically nowhere. Both Surrealists and Deconstructionists exposed the fragile distinctions between data and desire, hoping finally to unhinge the gate, already worn down from centuries of skepticism about reasonable communication, that separated art from life and rhetoric from literal meaning.

But for Habermas the hinge is worth repairing, as he takes an Excursus on Schiller to get from one lecture on Hegel to another in *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* (1987). By marking off fact from

fiction, the gate of consciousness safeguards a realm for imagination. It marks a border crossing from the land of material and ideological conflicts -- that run people aground -- into the fresh air of counterfactual “appearances,” which Schiller defended as the imaginary dimension that attests to human faculties for free speculation. Alongside the factual world of competition for limited resources and between conflicting ideas, there is a creative disinterested region for the inter-subjective communication that Schiller calls art and that Habermas claims as his own baseline for constructing collective agreements:

If art is to be able to fulfill its historic task of reconciling a modernity at variance with itself, it must not merely impinge on individuals, but rather transform the forms of life that individuals share. Hence, Schiller stresses the community-building, solidarity-giving force of art; its *public character*. The point of his analysis of the present is that in the modern conditions of life, particular forces could be differentiated and developed only at the cost of the fragmentation of the totality.³⁶

“*Totality* of character [of a society] must therefore be found in a people that is capable and worthy of exchanging the State of need for the State of freedom” [Schiller, Letter iv]. And freedom issues from the joyous play of appearance, which is why Habermas defends play

against Surrealist blurring of the border between art and life and also against Nietzschean deconstruction of their difference. These facile egalitarianisms whose outcomes are predictable collapse the imagination's room and stymie the dynamism that democracy depends on.

As a response to the often violent opposition between reason and desire that Habermas locates at the heart of modernity, art's sidestep from factual reality isn't exactly the solution that we would expect from the theorist of communicative action – unless, that is, we take him at his word about Schiller and allow that art should be understood as free communication that builds community. And in fact the genealogy of ideas we traced above between Kant and Schiller gives us good warrant to do so. It was Schiller's friendly amendment to Kant's *Third Critique* that taught Habermas to pick his way through modernity's deadlock between impersonal pure reason and embodied subjective practical reason. The Kantian bridge of aesthetic judgment, as expanded by Schiller into a dynamic process of autonomous creativity, underwrites Habermas' long sessions of communicative action. Schiller's unpretentious process made good, Habermas saw, on Kant's enlightened project to promote disinterested communication:

Kant's *Critique of Judgment* also provided an entry for speculative Idealism that could not rest content with the Kantian differentiations between understanding and sense, freedom and necessity, mind and nature, because it perceived in precisely these distinctions the expression of dichotomies inherent in modern life-conditions. But the mediating power of reflective judgment served Schelling and Hegel as the bridge to an intellectual intuition that was to assure itself of absolute identity. Schiller was more modest. He held on to the restricted significance of aesthetic judgment in order to make use of it for a philosophy of history. He thereby tacitly mixed the Kantian with the traditional concept of judgment, which in the Aristotelian tradition (down to Hannah Arendt) never completely lost its connection with the political concept of common sense. So he could conceive of art as primarily a form of communication and assign to it the task of bringing about 'harmony in society': 'All other forms of communication divide society, because they relate exclusively either to the private sensibility or to the private skillfulness of its individual members, that is, to what distinguishes between one man and another; only the communication of the Beautiful unites society,

because it relates to what is common to them all' [Letter xxvii].³⁷

I offer this fundamental connection between aesthetic education and discourse ethics as a tribute to Mayor Mockus and other daring public figures who may feel disinclined to call their work art and yet strive to adapt Habermas's communicative action in the service of local democracy. When I interviewed Mockus, he politely resisted my insistent line of questioning about the artistic cast of his administration, probably because the art label would somehow diminish, for some citizens, the seriousness of his efforts and accomplishments. All the same, convinced as he is that communicative action or discourse ethics is the principle of his politics, Mockus does admit to thinking like an artist – without theorizing why– when nothing else works. “When I feel trapped,” he explains, “I ask myself, ‘What would an artist do?’”³⁸ Perhaps there is less contradiction between communicative action and free play of the imagination than he or I had assumed, and fewer “unbridgeable gaps” than the inflexible categorical imperatives would locate as obstacles to negotiation.

DISMISSIVE de MAN

Schiller had surely encountered inflexibility, to judge from his irritation with the extreme stupidity and the extreme intelligence that would

have no truck with the mere appearance that freedom depends on. The exasperated tone of his defense predicts posthumous trouble from future readers. Paul de Man, for one, in an unfriendly reading of the *Aesthetic Education* would taunt Schiller for discrediting Kant as too stupid, and Hegel as too smart, to perceive Schiller's kind of beauty.³⁹ Protecting Kant and Hegel against Schiller in this way commits de Man to a willfully narrow reading of their respective projects. During the heyday of Deconstruction de Man dismisses Schiller for the same reasons that prompt Habermas to revive him as a stay against it. Schiller knew that life and art can bleed into one another, but he held out for the autonomy of art in order to cultivate the imagination and freedom, while de Man had founded his own career on denying this autonomy of art, along with his own complicity with Nazi propaganda that confused fact with paranoid fantasy.

De Man meant to diminish the seriousness of Schiller's accomplishments by limiting the legitimate uses of the word *Schein* to those anchored in existing phenomena, as evidence of the real world and therefore appropriate for philosophy. But the evident liberty that Schiller took with appearance was to free it from contemporary philosophy's apologetic references to the real thing and to follow the erratic tangents of appearance into fictions beyond phenomenological perception. To dismiss imagination from the play of appearances, and thereby to reduce the work of philosophy

to a decision between correct and incorrect representations of the real world, betrays a misguided simplicity of thought like the one J. L. Austin denounced among philosophers who assumed that the only use of words is to make true or false statements.⁴⁰ Contra Schiller, de Man discredits the imagination's unfettered exercise through counterfactual appearance and adds a rather misogynist corollary argument as if to clinch his case: the preference for art with its mass appeal over elite philosophy amounts to a feminine preference for form over a masculine respect for content.⁴¹ Hostile or grumpy, by dismissing women and Schiller in the same stroke because they allegedly favor frivolity and offend rigor, de Man also discounts the contrast Arendt draws between Hegel's elitism and Kant's frustrated ambition to popularize philosophy. By keeping "common sense" in common discourse but resignifying it as collective and disinterested judgment in all subjects, Kant inverted the order of importance from the few who enact history to the many who observe it, coming much closer to Schiller's mass appeal than de Man admits.

Reality is given and constrains us, but appearance in Schiller's enabling use of the word is a man-made effect. Appearance embodies the liberating and ludic pleasure of making something new. Schiller is careful to distinguish between appearance and deception; the one distances us from reality and so enables a critical perspective in order to intervene in it, and the

other interferes in the real world surreptitiously. The distinction is meant to pre-empt a categorical dismissal of all the games of appearance, though some skeptics won't stop at useful boundaries, as Habermas complains and as de Man demonstrates. Excessive caution banishes "all the fine arts of which appearance is the essence." Such dehumanizing zeal for reality tragically sacrifices freedom when it ostracizes beauty "because it is only an appearance" [Letter xxvi]. Today a grim seriousness refuses the broad-based seductions of art and eliminates the arts from public education, even while the business of art booms. Privileged producers play to curators and collectors, and these advantaged consumers value artworks as measures of their own elite taste and power of acquisition. But the fundamental playdrive, the actively creative faculty in all of us that Schiller was sure amounted to our talent for being human, has been relegated and reduced to dangerously narrow dimensions.⁴²

READY?

Schiller's *Letters* can gird the reader with sound arguments against zealots and skeptics alike. The book is not so much a training manual for young artists as a coaching aid to help them keep up the effort in face of discouragement. Kant may have imagined that his arguments depended only on clarity of thought and expression rather than on sentimental persuasion, though the redundancy and insistence of several arguments hint at some

nervousness as to how they will be received.-. But Schiller is both frank and eloquent about his challenge to charm and to win skeptics over to art, so firm is his faith in humanity's deep sensitivity to beauty even when reason fails. The letters are seductive if persistent, and by the last one only philistines refuse the invitation to play.

¹J. C. Friedrich Von Schiller (1759-1805): *Letters Upon The Aesthetic Education of Man*, 1794 Printed in *Literary and philosophical essays: French, German and Italian. With introductions and notes*. New York, Collier [c1910] Series: The Harvard classics, 32. This text is part of the [Internet Modern History Sourcebook](#). The Sourcebook is a collection of public domain and copy-permitted texts for introductory level classes in modern European and World history. Unless otherwise indicated the specific electronic form of the document is copyright. Permission is granted for electronic copying, distribution in print form for educational purposes and personal use. If you do reduplicate the document, indicate the source. No permission is granted for commercial use of the Sourcebook. © Paul Halsall, August 1998 halsall@murray.fordham.edu Schiller's importance in the intellectual history of Germany is by no means confined to his poetry and dramas. He did notable work in history and philosophy, and in the department of esthetics especially, he made significant contributions, modifying and developing in important respects the doctrines of Kant.

² Arendt, *On Revolution*.

³ Today the debate pits "Straussians" in Bush's circle, who interpret their teacher's work to denigrate the masses and keep decisions in the hands of the few, and outraged opponents. See James Atlas, "The Nation: Leo-Cons; A Classicist's Legacy: New Empire Builders" *NYT* May 4, 2003; and a defense of Leo Strauss's practical approach to democracy by Steven B. Smith, "Reading Leo Strauss," *NYT*, First Chapter June 25, 2006.

⁴ Schiller AE "But the state is an organisation which fashions itself through itself and for itself, and for this reason it can only be realised when the parts have been accorded to the idea of the whole. The state serves the purpose of a representative, both to pure ideal and to objective humanity, in the breast of its citizens, accordingly it will have to observe the same relation to its citizens in which they are placed to it, and it will only respect their subjective humanity in the same degree that it is ennobled to an objective existence. If the internal man is one with himself, he will be able to rescue his peculiarity, even in the greatest generalisation of his conduct, and the state will only become the exponent of his fine instinct, the clearer formula of his internal legislation. But if the subjective man is in conflict with the objective and contradicts him in the character of the people, so that only the oppression of the former can give the victory to the latter, then the state will take up the severe aspect of the law against the citizen, and in order not to fall a sacrifice, it will have to crush under foot such a hostile individuality, without any compromise. [Letter iv]

⁵ Paolo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, translated by Myra Berman Ramos [Letter Herder and Herder] p. 35.

⁶ Jacques Rancière, "The politics of aesthetics, Roundtable" <http://roundtable.keinorg/node/463>. parr. 2.

⁷ Freire, p.39.

⁸ Albeit, then, between the realm of the natural concept, as the sensible, and the realm of the concept of freedom, as the supersensible, there is a great gulf fixed, so that it is not possible to pass from the one to the other (by means of the theoretical employment of reason), just as if they were so many separate worlds, the first of which is powerless to exercise influence on the second: still the latter is meant to influence the former—that is to say, the concept of freedom is meant to actualize in the sensible world the end proposed by its laws; and nature must consequently also be capable of being regarded in such a way that in the conformity to law of its form it at least harmonizes with the possibility of the ends to be effectuated in it according to the laws of freedom. There must, therefore, be **a ground of the unity of the supersensible that lies at the basis of nature**, with what the concept of freedom contains in a practical way, and although the concept of this ground neither theoretically nor practically attains to a knowledge of it, and so has no peculiar realm of its own, still it renders possible the transition from the mode of thought according to the principles of the one to that according to the principles of the other.

⁹ Kant, 3rd Critique, Prologue. Par. #4. <http://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/k/kant/immanuel/k16j/>

¹⁰ Hannah Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy* p 43.

¹¹ Kant, quoted in Arendt, *Lectures*, p 64.

¹² Kant, Critique of Judgment, Prologue. "For these concepts [Letter not a priori] serve partly to restrain the officious pretensions of understanding, which, presuming on its ability to supply a priori the conditions of the possibility of all things which it is capable of knowing, behaves as if it had thus determined these bounds as those of the possibility of all things generally, and partly also to lead understanding, in its study of nature, according to a principle of completeness, unattainable as this remains for it, and so to promote the ultimate aim of all knowledge."

¹³ Kant, 3rd Critique, Prologue. "A critique of pure reason, i.e., of our faculty of judging on a priori principles, would be incomplete if the critical examination of judgment, which is a faculty of knowledge, and as such lays claim to independent principles, were not dealt with separately."

¹⁴ Arendt, *Lectures*, pp. 7-9.

¹⁵ Svetlana Boym, "Poetics and Politics of Estrangement: Victor Shklovsky and Hannah Arendt" *Poetics Today*.2005; 26: 581-611

¹⁶ Arendt, *Lectures*, pp. 46 and 55.

¹⁷ Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," #7: "There is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism." <http://www.leedstrinity.ac.uk/depart/media/staff/l/WBenjamin/CONCEPT2.html>

¹⁸ Richard Van Heertum (2006) "Marcuse, Bloch and Freire: reinvigorating a pedagogy of hope," *Policy Futures in Education*, 4(1), pp. 45-51 <http://dx.doi.org/10.2304/pfie.2006.4.1.45>. In footnote #1, the author addresses Marcuse's direct debt to Schiller as he develops the idea of an aesthetic education.

¹⁹ Paulo Freire wrote that during his time in exile: "I read Gramsci and I discovered that I had been greatly influenced by Gramsci long before I had read him". (p.7) Peter Mayo, (1999). *Gramsci, Freire and Adult Education: Possibilities for Transformative Action*, (Zed Books, London). Zed Books – www.zedbooks.demon.co.uk

²⁰ Augusto Boal followed Schiller's disciple Brecht. Boal's *Theater of the Oppressed* dedicates Chapter 3 to "Hegel and Brecht" in order to outdo them by turning the public into spect-actors. Brecht is equally reluctant to acknowledge what he learned from Schiller. See John Fuegi, *Bertolt Brecht: Chaos, According to Plan* - Google Books Result 1987 - books.google.com/books?isbn=0521282454...

²¹ Freire, 89.

²² Interview with Mockus, 2-27-08

²³ Freire, 40.

²⁴ See Freire, "Cultural Action for Freedom" Harvard Educational Review, 1972

²⁵ Freire, p.40.

²⁶ Dewey 25

²⁷ John Dewey, *Art as Experience* (Perigree Books, Penguin Putnam 1980 original, 1934) p.281 a friendly acknowledgment to Schiller; on pp 252-254 he's unfair to Kant.

²⁸ Dewey, p.5.

²⁹ Dewey, p. 15.

³⁰ Jacques Ranciere, *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible* translated with Introduction by Gabriel Rockhill, afterword by Slavoj Žižek (London, New York, Continuum, 2004; La Fabrique-Editions, 2000) pp. 23-24: “The aesthetic regime of the arts is the regime that strictly identifies art in the singular and frees it from any specific rule, from any hierarchy of the arts, subject matter, and genres. Yet it does so by destroying the mimetic barrier that distinguished ways of doing and making affiliated with art from other ways of doing and making, a barrier that separated its rules from the order of social occupations. The aesthetic regime asserts the absolute singularity of art and, at the same time, destroys any pragmatic criterion for isolating this singularity. It simultaneously establishes the autonomy of art and the identity of its forms with the forms that life uses to shape itself. Schiller’s *aesthetic state*, which is this [p. 24] regime’s first manifesto (and remains, in a sense, unsurpassable), clearly indicates this fundamental identity of opposites. The aesthetic state is a pure instance of suspension, a moment when form is experienced for itself. Moreover it is the moment of the formation and education of a specific type of humanity.”

³¹ Rancière, 27.

³² The celebrated mayor Edi Rama of Tirana, Albania, performed a similar feat by literally painting the town. See *The New Yorker*, June 27, 2005. Jane Kramer, “Painting the Town” p 50. “You hear him everywhere: a gravelly basso exhorting the lazy, seducing the skeptics, booming his way through a hip-hop track about Tirana that half the city seems to own. He is inexhaustible. He spends his days repairing the body and soul of a shattered capital and his nights prowling its streets, seeing that the work got done, and that no one has been stealing street lights or dropping beer bottles or cigarette wrappers—that people are behaving like citizens. Rama is a Balkan original, and maybe the most original thing about him is that he isn’t really a politician. He is an artist who, you might say, took Tirana for his canvas.”

³³ February 27, 2008, by videoconference from Bogotá.

³⁴ Habermas PDM 49.

³⁵ Habermas PDM p. 53.

³⁶ Habermas PDM p. 46.

³⁷ Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*, translated by Frederick G. Lawrence [Cambridge, MIT Press 1995] after lecture 2, “Hegel’s Concept of Modernity” is an “Excursus on Schiller’s ‘Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man’” 45-50; p.48-9.

³⁸ Interview, November 2004, at Harvard University.

³⁹ See Paul deMan, *Aesthetic Ideology*, Chapter on Kant and Schiller, pp. 129-162. Especially p. 152 The critique ends with a reference to Joseph Goebbels’ (mis)use of Schiller’s aesthetic ideology. But as I’ve pointed out in *Bilingual Aesthetics*, DeMan engages freely with Nietzsche’s work, despite its even more notorious usefulness for the Nazi party.

⁴⁰ J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things With Words* J. O. Urmson and Marina Sbisa, Editors; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975 Introduction.

⁴¹ DeMan, *Aesthetic Ideology*, p. 154.

⁴² Robin Marantz Henig, "Taking Play Seriously," *NYT Sunday Magazine*, February 17, 2008

⁴² Robin Marantz Henig, "Taking Play Seriously," *NYT Sunday Magazine*, February 17, 2008 I wonder if the same risk-averse grimness also reduces some leaders' rhetoric of politics to allegedly God-given rules and rights. Supreme Court Justice Scalia, for example, is proud to contrast our God-fearing country with Europe's un-moored and artificial secularism, as if the accomplishment of the United States Constitution were divine patrimony rather than the man-made work of art that merited ratification for its beauty as well as its substance. See Eric Slauter, *The State as a Work of Art: The Cultural Origins of the Constitution* (University of Chicago Press, 2008) Antonin Scalia, "God's Justice and Ours" Copyright (c) 2002 *First Things* (May 2002). "The reaction of people of faith to this tendency of democracy to obscure the divine authority behind government should not be resignation to it, but the resolution to combat it as effectively as possible. We have done that in this country (and continental Europe has not) by preserving in our public life many visible reminders that in the words of a Supreme Court opinion from the 1940s—"we are a religious people, whose institutions presuppose a Supreme Being." These reminders include: "In God we trust" on our coins, "one nation, under God" in our Pledge of Allegiance, the opening of sessions of our legislatures with a prayer, the opening of sessions of my Court with "God save the United States and this Honorable Court," annual Thanksgiving proclamations issued by our President at the direction of Congress, and constant invocations of divine support in the speeches of our political leaders, which often conclude, "God bless America." All this, as I say, is most un-European, and helps explain why our people are more inclined to understand, as St. Paul did, that government carries the sword as "the minister of God," to "execute wrath" upon the evildoer."